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HQ USFET
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DAS FORSCHUNGSAMT DES REICHSLUFTFAHRTMINISTERIUMS

Dissemination of information to our own intelligence agencies regarding one of Germany's more interesting information gathering services, the Forschungsamt, has been very limited. This silence has been caused largely by the fact that the Forschungsamt occupied a unique position in the Nazi intelligence organization. It was in no way related to the other agencies of the GIS, being entirely separate from the Abwehr. Later, when the RSHA was set up to co-ordinate and supervise the functions of the various member units of the GIS, the Forschungsamt still retained its distinct identity.

Another reason for the relatively small amount of published information regarding the Forschungsamt is that this agency apparently did not attain the significant position in the general picture that it might have. Its very presence, however, and its organization and methods are of significance to counter intelligence.

The FA was founded in 1933 by Hermann GOERING under the cover name of the Forschungsamt of the Reichsluftfahrtministerium. From the outset it was a highly secret organization which operated in every field of signal communication to gather information. Whether GOERING originally intended the FA to be his personal counterpart of the SD is problematical. Soon after its foundation, however, the FA functioned as an agency to supply information to many ministries and departments of the German government.

The Forschungsamt as an Object of Suspicion

The FA was in a vulnerable position because of its very independence. Every other department felt that the FA was poaching on its preserve and every high ranking Nazi governmental official distrusted it. This distrust is very understandable in a situation such as prevailed in Germany after 1933, in which every member of HITLER's immediate entourage was engaged in jockeying for power and was involved in secret machinations against one another. It was chiefly through GOERING's influence, coupled with the fact that HITLER undoubtedly felt that an information service of this nature was of value in keeping his disciples toeing the mark, that the FA weathered the storm and continued functioning until the end.

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Declassified by D. Janosek,
Deputy Associate Director for Policy and Records
on 12/10/2010 and by dp

Without discussing completely the chain of command and the various administrative levels of the FA, it should be pointed out that the headquarters was first located in BERLIN and was later moved to the BRESLAU area. The bureau chief was a man named SCHAPPER, who was responsible directly to the Marshall, or to his Prussian Secretary of State, KOERNER. There were six departments at the BERLIN headquarters, to which all information was funnelled for evaluation and dissemination. These were, in order of their numbered designation, Administration, Personnel and Training, Plans and Operations, Decoding, Evaluation and Distribution, and Technical Branch.

Many Security Measures Taken

The names given to the mentioned departments is self-explanatory. One function not disclosed by the departmental nomenclature, however, is that which had to do with the security measures adopted by the FA to keep its activities well hidden. There was a separate Security Section in the Administrative Department which was responsible for the guards, the electric eye system, passes and identification, and the various other checks that were established to safeguard the secrecy of the organization and its work. This feature of the FA was heavily stressed.

Department IV was concerned entirely with codes and ciphers. Its principal function "was breaking coded messages intercepted on cables, international and domestic, and by radio monitors. Reputed to be the most expert code group in Germany. Broke and read diplomatic, commercial, and military codes of all countries. Also responsible for developing codes for use of the bureau." (Source: Report from Captured Personnel and Material Branch Military Intelligence Division, US War Department, 25 June 1945.)

The chief of the decoding department was Georg SCHROEDER, recently taken into custody. SCHROEDER has said that the decoding department worked on messages intercepted not only by the FA stations but also by agencies of the GIS, one of the few instances of the FA's work being connected with other intelligence organizations. He claims that the Germans were not very successful in breaking up the more complex United States codes.

Department V was the heart of the organization, for it was the work of this department that converted all the various intercepted pieces of information into intelligence. It was divided into several sections with specialized functions and

highly trained, intelligent personnel. One section was charged with evaluating and dissemination of information, receiving the reports and dispatching them to the proper sections for analysis.

Filing System Very Complete

The Library Section of Department V kept voluminous files of practically every type of information from every country. It maintained very complete cross reference indices, recordings of intercepted phone and radio messages and transcriptions of public broadcasts of important world figures. In addition, this section possessed a huge library of text books, maps, telephone directories, city plans, newspapers and periodicals. All in all, this section provided the material that all other sections needed in evaluating properly the messages intercepted by the field stations.

Another section of Department V was the one interested in foreign affairs. This branch was one which supplied information to the Foreign Ministry regularly in addition to any other governmental agency desiring it. It was very active during the period preceding the war, when the Germans were intercepting so many messages of foreign diplomats and representatives in BERLIN and other parts of the Reich. Its reports were reputedly of high calibre, totally free from subjective interpretations.

There were, of course, other sections in this department devoted to economics, domestic politics and other allied subjects. Further, these various sections were divided into many specialized sub-sections.

Five Kinds of Signal Intercept Utilized

The operational functions of the entire organization were carried out by intercept stations of five different types. These stations were known as Forschungsstellen and were categorized as follows:

"A" stations - Telephone Intercept
"B" stations - Wireless Intercept
"C" stations - Radio Broadcast Monitor
"D" stations - Teletype and Telegraph Intercept
"F" stations - Mail Censorship

The A stations were scattered all through Germany and later in the occupied countries. These stations were equipped with one or two interceptor switchboards which enabled the operators to cut in on any conversation at any time. The tapping was done at the main telephone exchange of the post office and piped directly to the station, which was usually located in a private building. Included in the equipment of each listening post was a wiretype recorder, which could be brought into use whenever desired.

The operations of the A stations underwent a change with the advent of the war. Prior to September, 1939, the telephone intercept stations were most valuable in providing information from the many international lines then operating in Germany. BERLIN, of course, had a huge A station to tap the conversations of the diplomatic corps. The capital station had a staff of more than a hundred people, including fifty to sixty interceptors. After war broke out, this source of information was completely eliminated and the A stations turned their attentions largely to the problems of war production bottlenecks, attitudes of various large industries, and other domestic affairs.

Radio Intercept Important During War

The B stations were usually outside of towns at points of good wireless reception, not being faced with the problem of necessary proximity to telephone or cable lines. Radio messages were intercepted by short wave and then were relayed in written form to the headquarters of FA. After war started, this type of intercept became increasingly important insofar as foreign information was concerned because of the end of telephonic communication from Germany to other countries.

Only one C station existed. This performed a pure monitoring service of public broadcasts from other countries. The three D stations were located at BERLIN, VIENNA and DORTMUND, the chief centers of cablegrams leaving Germany. The functions of the D stations were also greatly diminished after the outbreak of the war. The F stations were organized after Germany was at war and they were never very extensive in their operations. Censorship offices were operated by OKW and later by the RSHA. The F stations consisted of small groups attached to these censorship posts.

In addition to the stations operating in Germany, the FA was quick to set up operational units in occupied countries. In Holland and Poland, for example, A stations were installed by task forces advancing with front line troops. In VIENNA, an A station was functioning two days after the occupation. Both A and B offices were quickly established in the Balkans, in Belgium and in the Baltic countries. In DANZIG a station had been installed secretly even before the annexation. Mobile units were also used during the Polish campaign but they are reported to have been largely unsuccessful, chiefly because of lack of cooperation from the army.

Intelligence Widely Disseminated

The FA was a source of information to HITLER regarding the activities of his assistants but its chief value to the Nazis was the supply of important, objectively reported intelligence to many governmental agencies and individuals. Before the war, the intercept stations provided much knowledge of the activities and intents of foreign powers. For example, it is reported that HITLER delayed his discussions with British prime minister CHAMBERLAIN during the BAD GODESBERG conference for several hours for the purpose of decoding a message sent to LONDON by the prime minister. After hostilities commenced, the FA continued to provide intelligence of the enemy, chiefly through its wireless monitoring.

The government agencies on the distribution list of the Forschungsamt were:

Reichswirtschaftsministerium	- Ministry of Domestic Economy
Reichsfinanzministerium	- Finance Ministry
Reichspropagandaministerium	- Propaganda Ministry
Auswaertiges Amt	- Foreign Ministry
Buero Ribbentrop	- Private Intelligence Service of the Foreign Ministry
Ministerium Speer	- Armament Ministry
RSHA	- Headquarters, Security Police
Oberkommando der Wehrmacht	- German High Command

Just how successful the operations of the FA were in the entire intelligence picture is not yet finally determined. So far the only information available regarding the FA has come as the result of interrogation of a handful of former members of

the organization by CIC in the European Theater and by the Captured Personnel and Material Branch, Military Intelligence Division, in WASHINGTON. Further investigation is necessary.

Disposition of Forschungsamt Employees

In the meantime, CIC and other agencies are confronted with the problem of disposition of FA members whom they may uncover. The Automatic Arrest Categories do not mention members of the FA. However, since many of these personalities may constitute a menace to present and future security because of their experience and training, such personalities can and should be arrested on that ground. Another basis for arrest is the fact that many FA employees were high ranking civil servants.

It is known that some, and there are probably many others unreported at the present, are working for Military Government as interpreters, inasmuch as so many of them are fluent in English and other languages. To continue this practice would be to threaten security.

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